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RACE AND EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY.

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ONLY SCHOOL INTEGRATION CAN PROVIDE NEGRO STUDENTS WITH EQUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY. AS CONFIRMED BY DATA FROM SUCH STUDIES AS THE COLEMAN REPORT AND THE U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS REPORT, "RACIAL ISOLATION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS," THE SOCIAL CLASS AND RACIAL COMPOSITION OF A SCHOOL STRONGLY INFLUENCES STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT AND ASPIRATIONS. NEGRO STUDENTS IN CLASSROOMS WHICH ARE MORE THAN HALF WHITE, AND ESPECIALLY STUDENTS IN CLASSROOMS WHERE THERE IS COMPLETE INTERRACIAL ACCEPTANCE, ACHIEVE AT A SIGNIFICANTLY HIGHER LEVEL THAN NEGRO STUDENTS IN SEGREGATED CLASSROOMS. HOWEVER WHITE PUPILS IN PREDOMINANTLY NEGRO CLASSROOMS PERFORM BELOW THE LEVEL OF WHITE STUDENTS IN ALL-WHITE SCHOOLS. INTERRACIAL EDUCATION BENEFITS BOTH WHITE AND NEGRO STUDENTS BY OFFERING THEM CONTACTS WHICH HELP TO PREPARE THEM FOR INTERRACIAL LIVING AS ADULTS. NEGRO STUDENTS IN INTEGRATED CLASSROOMS TEND TO HAVE A GREATER, MORE INTERNALIZED SENSE OF CONTROL OVER THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS AND ALSO TEND TO EVALUATE THEMSELVES ACCORDING TO MORE MIDDLE-CLASS, AND THUS HIGHER, STANDARDS OF ACHIEVEMENT AND ASPIRATION. NEGRO STUDENTS WHO HAVE CLOSE WHITE FRIENDS IN THEIR PEER GROUP MAKE THE MOST USE OF THIS CROSS-RACIAL SELF-EVALUATION, AND THUS ARE THE MOST STRONGLY AFFECTED BY THEIR INTERRACIAL SCHOOL EXPERIENCE. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED AT A SYMPOSIUM ON IMPLICATIONS OF COLEMAN REPORT ON EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY, WASHINGTON, D.C., SEPTEMBER 3, 1967. (LB)

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RACE AND EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

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In racial terms, the complex concept of "equal educational opportunity" translates into effective integrated schooling. That anything less than this has not proven to be truly equal opportunity for Negro American children is a demonstrably harsh fact of the current scene - and there is reason to believe that the same holds true for white American children as well. There are many reasons for this translation, a number of which receive considerable support from the extensive Coleman data. This brief summary will utilize analyses of these data from the 1966 Coleman Report itself,¹ the 1967 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights report on Racial Isolation in the Public Schools,² and more recent unpublished work in which I have collaborated with Marshall Smith and Robert Riley of Harvard University.

The most significant school correlate of achievement test scores uncovered by the Coleman study is the social class climate of the school's student body. This variable is measured by the social class origins of all of a school's students; and it appears most critical in the later grades and somewhat more important for Negro than white children. Put bluntly, children of all backgrounds tend to do better in schools with a predominantly middle-class milieu; and this trend is especially true in the later grades where the full force of peer-group influence is felt. This basic finding of the Coleman Report has been vigorously challenged by a number of methodological critics, none of whom seem aware that the identical finding had been attained by three earlier

¹ Coleman, J. S., Campbell, E. Q., Hobson, C. J., McPartland, J., Moon, A. M., Weinfeld, F. D., & York, R. L. Equality of educational opportunity. Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1966 (No. OE-38001).

² U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, Racial Isolation in the public schools. Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1967.

studies which employed sharply different measures and samples from those used by Coleman.³

The racial significance of this fundamental aspect of the Coleman Report becomes obvious as soon as we recall that only about one-fourth at most of the Negro American population can be accurately described as "middle-class." Apart from strictly racial factors, then, extensive desegregation is necessary to provide Negro pupils with predominantly middle-class school settings. On these class grounds alone, Negro children in interracial classrooms would be expected to achieve more than similar Negro children in all-Negro classrooms, and these expectations are supported in the Coleman data. Negro children from "more than half" white classrooms score higher on both reading and mathematical achievement tests than other Negro children; and this effect is strongest among those who began their interracial schooling in the early grades.⁴ In addition, Negro students in "more than half" white classrooms yield as a group higher standard deviations in test scores than Negroes in classrooms with fewer whites.⁵

But are these achievement benefits of the interracial classroom completely a function of the school social class factor? Or are racial composition factors independently related in addition? The text of the Coleman Report is equivocal on this point; it speaks of the desegregation effect being "...largely, perhaps wholly, related to..." or "...largely accounted for by..." other student body characteristics.⁶ The Civil Rights Commission's re-analysis of these data, however, focuses further attention upon this particular question and finds that there is indeed a critical racial composition correlate. The re-analysis uncovers relatively large and consistent differences in favor of those twelfth-grade Negroes who are in "more than half" white classrooms even after the two major factors of the Coleman analysis have been controlled - family social

³ Cleveland, Stuart, A tardy look at Stouffer's findings in the Harvard mobility project. Public Opinion Quarterly, 1962, 26, 453-454; Michael, J. A. High school climates and plans for entering college. Public Opinion Quarterly, 1961, 25, 585-595; Wilson, A. B. Residential segregation of social classes and aspirations of high school boys. American Sociological Review, 1950, 24, 836-845.

⁴ Coleman, et al., op. cit., p. 332.

⁵ Ibid., p. 333. The scores of the few Negroes with all white classmates have the highest SD's of all, though smaller cell sizes are involved.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 307, 330.

class and school social class.⁷ The apparent benefits of interracial classrooms are not linear; that is, Negroes in predominantly-white classrooms score higher on the average, but those in classrooms with "less than half" whites do no better than those in all-Negro classrooms. Once again, this effect of improved performance appears greatest for those Negro children who begin their biracial training in the early grades. Moreover, it is not a zero-sum game. The achievement scores of white children in biracial classes with "more than half" white students average just as high as those of comparable children in all-white classes.⁸

The Commission Report also makes a crucial distinction between a merely desegregated school and an integrated one. Desegregation involves only a specification of the racial mix of students - preferably, more than half white. It does not include any description of the quality of the interracial contact. Merely desegregated schools can be either effective or ineffective, can boast genuine interracial acceptance or intense interracial hostility. In short, a desegregated school is not necessarily a "good school." Recall the larger standard deviations for the test scores of Negro children in desegregated classrooms. Many of these children are doing extremely well, but others are not doing nearly as well. What accounts for the difference? The Commission's re-analysis of these Coleman data suggests that the explanatory intervening variable is interracial acceptance. In the schools which can truly be described as "integrated" where most teachers report no racial tension whatsoever, Negro students evince higher verbal achievement, more definite college plans, and more positive racial attitudes than comparable Negro students in tense, merely "desegregated" schools.⁹ Desegregation, then, is a necessary but not sufficient condition for integration, for integration involves in addition to racial mix a climate of interracial acceptance.

While important, high achievement test scores are surely not the sole goal of education. Indeed, many advocates argue for integrated education only in terms of the non-academic benefits of diverse contacts. Preparation for the interracial world of the future, they insist, demands interracial schools today for both white and Negro youth. The Coleman data speak to this issue, too.

⁷ U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, op. cit., p. 90.

⁸ Ibid., p. 160.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 157-158.

The Coleman Report itself shows that white students who attend public schools with Negroes are the least likely to prefer all-white classrooms and all-white "close friends"; and this effect, too, is strongest among those who begin their interracial schooling in the early grades.¹⁰ Consistent with these results are data from Louisville, Kentucky on Negro pupils. In an open choice situation, Negro children are far more likely to select predominantly white high schools if they are currently attending predominantly white junior high schools.¹¹

A Civil Rights Commission survey of urban adults in the North and West suggests that these trends continue into adulthood. Negro adults who themselves attended desegregated schools as children tend to be more eager to have their children attend such schools and do in fact more often send their children to such schools than comparable Negro adults who attended only segregated schools as children.¹² They are typically making more money and more frequently in white-collar occupations than previously-segregated Negroes of comparable origins. Similarly, white adults who experienced as children integrated schooling differ from comparable whites in their greater willingness to reside in an interracial neighborhood, to have their children attend interracial schools, and to have Negro friends.¹³ For both Negro and white adults, then, it appears that desegregated schooling does in fact prepare its products for interracial living as adults.

Most discussion to date of these results has centered upon their practical implications. But of greater psychological significance are the questions they raise concerning the actual dynamics of the interracial classroom and the precise individual processes which undergird these crude aggregate findings. A number of fascinating clues concerning these psychological processes are provided in the Coleman Report, two of which deserve special mention: "fate control" and

¹⁰ Coleman, et al., op. cit., p. 333.

¹¹ U. S. Commission on Civil Rights. Civil rights USA: Public schools, southern states, 1962. Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1963.

¹² U. S. Commission on Civil Rights. Racial isolation in the public schools, op. cit., pp. 111-113.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 111-113.

"social evaluation." The former is essentially Rotter's "internal-external control of reinforcement" variable;¹⁴ while the latter refers to the cross-racial comparisons made possible by the interracial classroom.¹⁵

Student personality variables are surprisingly strong independent correlates of test performance in Coleman's data for all groups of children, though different measures predict white and Negro achievement. An "academic self-concept" variable - measured by such items as "How bright do you think you are in comparison with the other students in your grade?" - proves more significant for white performance. But a brief scale of "fate control"-indicated, for example, by disagreeing that "Good luck is more important than hard work for success" - is much more important for Negro performance. Not surprisingly, this sense of internal control among Negroes tends to be greater in desegregated schools.

Clearly, these personality-achievement findings result from tapping into a complex process involving a two-way causal pattern. Not only do those Negro children with a sense of internal control subsequently do better in their school achievement, but those who do well in school achievement undoubtedly begin to gain a sense of internal control. Nevertheless, it is tempting to speculate with Coleman that each child faces a two-stage problem: first, he must learn that he can within reasonably broad limits act effectively upon his surroundings; and, second, he must then evaluate his own relative capabilities for mastering the environment. The critical stage for white children seems to be the second stage concerning the self-concept. While the critical stage for Negro children seems realistically enough to involve the question of manipulating an often harsh and overpowering environment. In any event, more detailed experimental work along the lines of Rotter's research and Coleman's speculation appears warranted.

A number of theoretical considerations from social psychology - ranging

¹⁴ Rotter, J. B. Internal versus external control of reinforcement. Psychological Monographs, 1966, 80, Whole No. 609.

¹⁵ Pettigrew, T. F. Social evaluation theory: Convergences and applications. In D. Levine (Ed.), 1967 Nebraska Symposium on Motivation. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, in press.

from Allport's intergroup contact theory¹⁶ and Newcomb's acquaintance theory¹⁷ to Rokeach's belief dissimilarity theory¹⁸ - suggest a broad social evaluation hypothesis: Many of the consequences of interracial classrooms for both Negro and white children are a direct function of the opportunities such classrooms provide for cross-racial self-evaluation. It follows from such an hypothesis that the more opportunities for cross-racial self-evaluation a school provides, the greater the consequences. And it also follows that those children for whom peers of the other race become referent should evince the largest changes.

These predictions are consistent with the analyses of the Coleman and Commission reports and with the conceptual framework and experimental results on biracial performance of Katz.¹⁹ Hence, the repeated indications of the special potency of desegregation in the early elementary grades fit well with the self-evaluation view. Young children have less rooted self-conceptions and have not yet adopted uniracial school cliques as their chief peer referents. So, too, do the Coleman conclusions that the most significant school correlate of test scores is the social class climate of the school's student body; and that this factor is especially important for Negro children. Schools with a middle-class milieu furnish higher comparison levels for achievement and aspirations; and these higher levels will be especially influential for disadvantaged Negro youngsters whose referents otherwise might well have lower levels. And the special efficacy of "more than half" white classrooms and schools, particularly those characterized by cross-racial acceptance, is also consistent with these predictions. The integrated class and school are unique in the range of opportunities they provide Negro children for maximal self-

¹⁶ Allport, G. W. The nature of prejudice. Cambridge, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1954.

¹⁷ Newcomb, T. M. The acquaintance process. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1961.

¹⁸ Rokeach, M., & Mezei, L. Race and shared belief as factors in social choice. Science, 1966, 151, 167-172; and Rokeach, M., Smith, P. W., & Evans, R. I. Two kinds of prejudice or one? In M. Rokeach, The open and closed mind. New York: Basic Books, 1960; Pp. 132-168.

¹⁹ Katz, I. Review of evidence relating to effects of desegregation on the performance of Negroes. American Psychologist, 1964, 19, 381-399.

evaluation against higher comparison levels.

The inclusion in Coleman's student schedules of a question about cross-racial friendships makes possible direct tests of the social evaluation hypothesis. All students tested in the sixth, ninth, and twelfth grades were asked: "Think now of your close friends. How many of them are white? None, less than half, about half, more than half, all." Assuming "close friends" to be referent, the social evaluation hypothesis predicts that the major consequences of interracial schools for both Negroes and whites will be found among those who report "close friends" of the other race.

The published analyses employing the "close friend" variable confirm this hypothesis. Thus, with the family and school social class variables controlled, Negro children with close white friends far less often prefer all Negro friends and an all-Negro school than other Negro children regardless of the racial composition of their classrooms.²⁰ Classrooms with half or more white students relate strongly to these interracial preferences solely because Negroes in them more often have close white friends.²¹ In addition, Negroes who participate in extra-curricular activities more frequently report close white friends.²²

Negro achievement scores and college aspirations present a somewhat different picture from the attitude data. Having close white friends is related neither to higher scores nor aspirations in all-Negro classrooms. But in more than half white classrooms Negro students with close white friends tend to have both higher achievement scores and college aspirations.²³

Friendship operates in a similar fashion for white students. Hence, with father's education controlled, having close Negro friends is strongly and positively related to white preference for an interracial school.²⁴ And recall that white pupils who begin their interracial schooling in the early grades are more likely to have close Negro friends when they reach the ninth and twelfth

²⁰ U. S. Commission on Civil Rights. Appendices to Racial Isolation in the Public Schools. Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1967; Pp. 97-99.

²¹ Ibid., p. 103.

²² Ibid., p. 102.

²³ Ibid., Pp. 100-101.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 141.

TABLE 1
VERBAL ACHIEVEMENT OF WHITE TWELFTH-GRADERS
IN PREDOMINANTLY-NEGRO SCHOOLS¹

Parental Education ²	Low		High	
White Composition of Classroom	Half or Less	More than Half	Half or Less	More than Half
Some of "Closest Friends" Are Negro				
Verbal Test Means (N)	24.8 (328)	26.2 (150)	27.8 (100)	30.2 (53)
None of "Closest Friends" Are Negro				
Verbal Test Means (N)	27.8 (221)	30.6 (237)	30.3 (77)	34.1 (107)
Mean Difference	-3.0	-4.6	-2.5	-3.9
t	3.15	3.33	1.32	1.87
p (one-tailed)	<.005	<.001	<.10	<.05

¹ These are special analyses from the Coleman Report data (Coleman, et al., 1966); these data are from the metropolitan Northeast.

² All of the schools involved in these analyses are from predominantly lower-status schools since the cells for upper-status schools are too small for meaningful comparisons. "Low parental education" applies to children whose parents average less than high school graduation (12 years).

grades.²⁵ But the published analyses do not consider the white child in the predominantly Negro school. Since white pupils in these schools perform on the average below comparable white children in predominantly white schools, the social evaluation prediction is that these white children in predominantly Negro schools with close Negro friends will score lower than those without Negro friends. In recent preliminary analyses of the Coleman data from the metropolitan Northeast, this prediction is confirmed. (See Table 1) It would appear that formal aggregate models of the consequences of interracial classrooms are possible beginning with Coleman data and a social evaluation framework.

Finally, let it be clearly stated that Coleman and his associates achieved a landmark contribution in an amazingly short span of time. Though not without its problems of sampling, non-response, and analysis, this massive and ambitious study should influence educational research and practice for years to come. It is of necessity a broad-gauged, aggregate survey of what exists now in American public schools. It could neither detail precise learning processes nor test what American public schools could potentially become in the future. Similar to the naked eye compared with an electronic microscope, the Coleman Report outlined the gross facts of American education today; while the precision of the limited experiment is now needed to detail the undergirding processes that go unseen by the survey. From fate control to social evaluation, the results of the Coleman Report are ripe for fruitful work.

²⁵ Coleman, *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 333.